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ABSTRACT

The adolescent's exploration of himself and his relationship to other individuals, as well as the interaction between the social and physical environment and his own behavior are among the goals of the Identity Unit. The unit infuses these objectives with the cognitive components of a junior-senior English literature curriculum. This guide offers an expanded explanation of the manner in which the unit was developed, the general concepts of the unit and its educational objectives, as well as specific materials and techniques used to meet these objectives. Informal evaluation of the course by teachers and students suggests that students enjoyed the process of self-discovery and experienced positive changes in self-esteem. (Author/PC)

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ADOLESCENCE AND THE "IDENTITY CRISIS"

A CURRICULUM GUIDE

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by

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CG 009 022

The high school for which this curriculum was planned is located in a midwestern city with a population of approximately 30,000. The school has designed a flexible program to meet the needs of a diversified student body of 3,200.

ADOLESCENCE AND THE "IDENTITY CRISIS"

A CURRICULUM GUIDE

Introduction

According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development,[1] the search for identity is the major task of the adolescent. This turbulent period is critical in the development of an individual's feelings of self worth, autonomy, and competence. Future emotional difficulties may be prevented by a positive, well-integrated resolution of the "identity crisis".

The school, as the adolescents' major point of reference in the community, may play a major role, fostering positive emotional growth. Through a curriculum which openly advocates the integration of such a learning objective with cognitive goals, the educational process becomes more in touch with the complex needs of maturing human beings.

The adolescent's exploration of himself and his relationship to other individuals, as well as the interaction between the social and physical environment and his own behavior are among the goals of the Identity Unit. The unit infuses these objectives with the cognitive components of a Junior-Senior English literature curriculum. Through the study of literature and other artistic forms, the students may not only gain the awareness of his own individuality, but may also see themselves as part of a more universal struggle for identity. The classroom is a forum for the intermingling of thought and feeling, self mastery and understanding of others, and of skill development and personal growth.

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[1] Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1950.

Development of the Unit

The Identity Unit represents a collaborative effort between two community agencies, a high school and the local community mental health center. The impetus for the project stemmed from the English Department's rapid change from traditional year-long course sequences to three, six and nine week curriculum modules on a variety of topics including Identity. One high school English teacher contacted the Community Mental Health Center which provides consultants who specialize in school programming. A project team, composed of two consultants,[2,3] a high school English teacher[4] and a student teacher[5] worked together in the planning and implementation of the curriculum unit.

The concept of team teaching is expanded to include members from an outside agency as well as in-school teachers. The model of program consultation is broadened as consultants actively participate in the classroom in addition to acting as resources for content material in the psychosocial domain, providing support for the teachers and modeling skills which facilitate the appropriate expression of feelings and personal attitudes. The teacher's role is that of a curriculum planner, explicater, group facilitator, role model, and permanent resource person in the classroom.

The relationship between the consultants and the teachers grew from a mutual respect, a regular flow of feedback, and the development of admiration and positive feelings for each other, both personally and professionally. Although the team committed several half day sessions and much additional

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"homework" time to the project, the collaborative attitude allowed the task of curriculum development to become a pleasant, stimulating, and rewarding experience for consultants, teachers, and students, alike.

Classroom Process

In line with the affective and cognitive goals of the unit, as well as the teacher roles defined by the team, a variety of classroom activities (e.g., discussion, role playing, thought provoking questionnaires, films) are utilized to facilitate student and teacher participation. Students select reading material from a variety of literary genres and complete written assignments of compositions, poetry, essays and short stories. Creative expression through art and music is also encouraged. All individuals in the classroom are recognized and respected for their own ideas, attitudes, and contributions to the activity flow. The mix of media and action methods challenges the group, meets the individual needs of students at different achievement levels, and maintains a high level of personal involvement as well as intellectual interest in the course work.

Description of the Unit

Following is a summary of the general concepts and educational objectives of the unit. The content outline of the course, organized according to subtopics includes a brief description of selected class activities, student reading lists and pertinent teacher resources. Although the unit was taught over an eight week period, the total time period is flexible and may vary according to the number of assignments and activities. The topics follow a logical sequence,

but may be applied out of context to specific and relevant classroom issues.

I. General Concepts

A. A major task of adolescence is the search for identity: who we are and what we want to be.

B. Identity is one's concept of self.

C. Identity is a process which develops and changes as one interacts with other individuals, social systems, and the physical environment.

D. Identity may be described in terms of thoughts, feelings, values, and actions.

E. Technology and social change affect the formation and stability of identity and the individual's relationship to society.

II. Educational Objectives

A. To familiarize students with a wide variety of literary offerings whose authors are involved with the above concepts.

B. To increase awareness of one's own feelings, attitudes and values.

C. To sensitize oneself to the feelings, attitudes and values of others.

D. To perceive the causal relationships between thoughts, feelings and actions.

E. To highlight the impact of the familial, social and cultural environment upon individual development.

F. To evaluate the effect of social roles and expectations upon behavior.

G. To recognize each person's unique qualities while affirming the universality of human nature.

CONTENT OUTLINE

I. Introduction

A. Activities

1. Questionnaire: "Who Am I"

Sample questions are: "What troubles you most?" "What would you like to be doing five years from now?" "Do you think you have missed much in life?" "What do you know about me (teacher)?"

2. Assignment: Value Sharing

Students and teacher individually prioritize a list of values (e.g., love, health, religion, autonomy, loyalty, wisdom, power, wealth). A class discussion follows, concentrating on individual similarities, differences and group trends.

B. Student Resources

1. Artistic Reproductions

Evergood, Philip, "Her World"
Wyeth, Andrew, "The Scarecrow", "Albert's Son"

2. Audio-Visual Materials

Man's Search for Identity, The Center for Humanities, Inc., 2 Holland Avenue, White Plains, New York 10603.

3. Novels

Bach, Richard, Jonathan Livingston Seagull
Camus, Albert, The Stranger

4. Poetry

Heine, Heinrich, "My Double"
Perreault, John, "No One in Particular"
Pirandello, Lugi, "Who Am I"
Uribe, Armando, "Who Are You?" (translated by Miller Williams)

5. Short Stories and Essays

Golding, William, "Thinking As a Hobby"
Steinbeck, John, "Lennie and George"

II. Search for Self

A. Activities

1. Novel Study: The Secret Sharer by Joseph Conrad. Discussion centers upon the psychological meaning of the double motif in the novelette and the formation of the identity of the main character.

2. Movie: "The Invention of the Adolescent". Discussion emphasizes changes in the family and in society through the ages; how individuals must adapt their behaviors to social realities; the role of school and learning in the past; the meaning of maturity, adulthood, childhood; and the role of the adolescent today.

3. Nonfiction Discussion: "Eight Stages of Development" (excerpts from Erikson's Childhood and Society). Leader explicates Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. Students cite examples of familiar behavior and experiences relevant to each stage. Examples from literature and from life are iterated. Leader stresses the relationship between individual development, social environment, and societal change.

B. Student Resources

1. "The End of One", seven minutes, color film, Learning Corporation of America.
"The Invention of the Adolescent", 28 minutes, black and white film, National Film Board of Canada and McGraw-Hill, 1968.

2. Novels and Drama

Conrad, Joseph, The Secret Sharer
Ellison, Ralph, The Invisible Man
Harris, Christie, Let X Be Excitement
James, Henry, Portrait of a Lady
Joyce, James, Portrait of an Artist As a Young Man
Kingman, Lee, The Peter Pan Bag
Murphy, Robert, A Certain Island
Pfeffer, Susan B., Better Than All Right
Rosten, Norman, Under The Board Walk
Shaw, George Bernard, The Devil's Disciple
Wetzel, Donald, The Lost Skiff
Wolff, Ruth, A Crack in the Sidewalk
Young, Al, Snakes

3. Poetry

Graves, Robert, "In Broken Images"
Gunn, Thom, "The Secret Sharer"
Hughes, Langston, "Desert"

4. Short Stories and Essays

Anderson, Hans Christian, "The Shadow"
Hale, Nathan, "My Double & How He Undid Me"
May, Rollo, "Man's Search for Himself"
Trilling, Lionel, "The Other Margaret"

C. Teacher Resources

Erikson, Erik, Childhood and Society, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1950.
Erikson, Erik, Identity, Youth and Crisis, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1968.

III. Values

A. Activities

1. Movie: "The Lottery". Discussion focuses on the relationship of value selection to self-development, value conflicts, and concepts of scape-goating and group value phenomenon.

2. Discussion: "Value Sharing"

The seven stages of value clarification as in Values Clarification are listed and discussed.

Leader poses forced choice questions regarding student's self perceptions (e.g., Are you more of a saver or a spender? Are you more yes or no?). Students move to the side of the room designated for that choice and discuss with another person for two minutes why they made that particular choice.

Leader presents students with value choices (e.g., Which would you rather be: an only child, youngest or oldest? If you needed help in your studies, would you go to teacher, parent or friend?) Students privately rank their preferences. Problems are posted on newsprint and those who wish to publicly affirm their choices may do so.

B. Student Resources

1. Audio-Visual Materials

"The Lottery", 18 minutes, color film, Encyclopedia Brittanica Educational Corporation, 1970.

2. Novels

Arnow, Harriet, The Weed Killer's Daughter
Eckert, Allan, The Dreaming Tree
Glennon, Maurade, No More Septembers
Kops, Bernard, The Dissent of Dominick Shapiro

3. Short Stories and Essays

Baldwin, James, "A Letter to My Nephew"
Roth, Phillip, "Father and Son"

C. Teacher Resources

Simon, S., Howe, R., and Kirschenbaum, M., Values Clarification, New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1972.

IV. Feelings

A. Activities

1. Music: Students listen to a variety of musical selections and discuss the feelings which the music evokes.

2. Art: Students explore visual presentations of feelings by creating self-portraits. Teacher collects faces from magazines, cuts them in half and requests that students complete the image.

3. Poetry and Essays: Students study selections which express different feelings.

4. Discussion: Leader distributes a written example of "angry" dialogue for the students to read. Discussion which follows focuses on the kinds of feelings involved (e.g., anger, hurt, guilt, fear), the ways they can be expressed, and the relationship between feelings and behaviors (verbal and non-verbal). Leader emphasizes that feelings clearly and directly stated are more likely to gain an appropriate response to the issue at hand.

B. Student Resources

1. Non-Fiction

Powell, John, Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?

2. Poetry

Dickenson, Emily, "I Am Nobody", "I Took My Power"

3. Short Stories and Essays

Dostoevsky, Fyodor, "Notes from the Underground"
Kafka, Franz, "Metamorphosis"

C. Teacher Resources

Milt, Harry, "What Can You Do About Quarreling?", Public Affairs Committee, August, 1972.

V. Interpersonal Identity

A. Activities

1. Questionnaire: "Sex Role Inventory". Students and teachers fill in questionnaire indicating whether adjectives (e.g., passive, loyal, neat, mechanical) are feminine, masculine or equally applicable to both sexes. Opinions are elicited and polls are taken on a number of different items. Discussion centers on group trends and the connotations of the various adjectives for the individual, the peer group, parents, and the larger society in the present and the past.

2. Role Play: "Family Roles". Leader introduces the concepts of role, role behavior, and group membership. The class divides into groups of four. In each group the roles of father, mother, child and observer are assumed. Leader discusses the five interpersonal styles as outlined by Satir: Blaming, Placating, Logical, Distracting, and Authentic. Leader distributes cards to students which indicate which of the four styles each student is to assume. The task for the group may be to plan a family vacation or to decide how to spend a lottery prize. The task may continue for approximately five minutes. Action is then stopped and class discusses the effectiveness of the group in performing the task, how each member felt in his/her role, etc. Observers give feedback to their own small group. This procedure may continue for several rounds with individuals assuming different roles and interpersonal styles.

B. Student Resources

1. Novels

Wolff, Ruth, A Trace of Footprints
Woiwode, L., What I'm Going to Do, I Think

C. Teacher Resources

1. Novels

Satir, Virginia, Peoplemaking, Palo Alto, California: Science Behavior Books, Inc., 1972.

VI. Racial and Cultural Identity

A. Activities

1. Movie: "The Forgotten American". Discussion focuses on the relationship between the Indians and other Americans

both in the past and in the present.

2. Guest Speakers: Foreign visitors describe the impact of their cultures on identity formation. Questions from students follow.

B. Student Resources

1. Audio-Visual Materials

"The Forgotten American", 25 minutes, color film, CBS News Carousel, 1969.

2. Novels and Drama

Baldwin, James, Go Tell It on The Mountain
Bullett, George, The Black Wine
Hansberry, Lorraine, Raisin in the Sun
Hunter, Kristin, The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou
Momaday, Scott, House Made of Dawn

3. Student Resources

Baldwin, James, "Sonny's Blues"
Wright, Richard, "The Man Who Went to Chicago"..

4. Games

"Blacks and Whites: The Role Identity and Neighborhood Action Game", A Psychology Today Game, Communications/ Research/Machines, Inc., 1970.

VII. The Impact of Social Change

A. Activities

1. Movie: "Cosmic Zoom". Students view movie and express their reactions in written form.

2. Panel: "Identity - Yesterday & Today". Representatives of different generations discuss their own adolescent experiences.

B. Student Resources

1. Audio-Visual Materials

"Cosmic Zoom", 8 minutes, color film, National Film Board of Canada, 1970.

Summary and Evaluation

The aim of such a curriculum is to add to the established benefits of the traditional English classroom. Obviously, the elements of this curriculum are familiar to teachers of English everywhere. What is different is the attempt to make the usual materials more personally interesting and more immediately applicable to the students' ongoing life situations.

"Adolescence and 'The Identity Crisis'" provides high school students with an opportunity to gain a better awareness of themselves and their relationships to others through the study of literature and participation in personally interesting classroom activities. Informal evaluation of the course by teachers and students suggests that students enjoy the process of self-discovery and experience positive changes in self-esteem. Open discussions and the wide variety of group methods allow for greater sharing of ideas and feelings between individual students and between students and teachers. Motivation to read about people and to express concepts and attitudes in writing increases due to the high level of personal involvement which students experience. The success of the unit indicates that adolescents are open and ready for cognitive input which strikes directly at the personal conflicts which they are experiencing, and encounters them "where they're at" psychologically--in a paradoxical, confused, and tumultuous search for meaning and self.

I think this has been a really great course. This class on identity will apply to the rest of my life. It pertains to people and life in general. It's been great! I'd like to take it for a full year. You could never learn too much about developing into yourself.

Leslie Roberts 11th Grade

Most of all, I enjoy my one special talent -- if there is no one else to speak to, I speak to myself, for who can one best converse with than oneself, with whom one experiences no misunderstandings.

.....And there I am, a man everyone knows.....or do they?

Some people wonder who I am.
Some people have an idea who I am.
Some are sure who I am.
Some may be right about who I am.
Who knows?
I ask who knows who I am?
I'd like to know.
Is my idea only an idea
Or am I right about who I am?
I try to be myself.
I, the individual trying to step to the drum I hear,
Like a worm going through his hole he has made for himself.
Unique. I am unique in my own way.
Me, What does it mean?
That's who I am, me. The unique me.
That's who I am.
And I am me.

Guy Bradley, 12th Grade

I'd like to be a nice nice girl
Sweet and good and kind
But darn that demon devil
Keeps creeping up behind
He taps me on the shoulder
And, Oh, I hate to say
He makes me change from good to bad
Back and forth each day.

So sometimes when you see me
And I seem extra mean
Remember I can't help myself
And I'm not what I may seem
So if you see a halo
When I am extra sweet
Enjoy me for I may not be
That way next time we meet.

Anonymous

What I am
Is what I am
But why do I try
To be what I am not
It makes no sense
So, why . . .

Vicki Benhart
12th Grade

Thought is based on the recognition of reality. No problem physical or metaphysical, is solved by pretending to deny the existence of that problem. Only recognition of the problem and the application of the question "Right or Wrong?" two possible answers will lead to a solution.

Anonymous

WHO AM I

I am but one upon this earth
(Who walk around and wonder)
What is life?
Who is life?
No one knows
(I'll never know)
Oh, God, who am I
I could be the world if I tried
(Within my own little world)
I could be anything
(If I really tried)
But since I'm not the world
And since I'm not just anything
Who am I?
I am me and you are me too (and together)
We are us
(So let's make it!) Lacine Forbes
11th Grade